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disertation on
Diarrhoea or Leucorrhoea

C. Purnell

admitted March 13. 1811



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Diarrhoea or Loosenss.

Cullen makes this disease to consist in an evacuation by stool more frequent and of more liquid matter than usual. This leading and characteristic symptom is so diversified in its degree, in its causes, and in the variety of matter evacuated that it is almost impossible to give any general history of the disease.

So closely is this complaint allied to dysentery in many of its symptoms that we may readily confound the two diseases. But nosologists have endeavoured to distinguish them by alleging that Diarrhoea is never contagious, is unattended by fever, has evacuations though not perfectly natural, yet much more so than in dysentery, - and is accompanied by less tormina and tenesmus. - All this is true as a general rule: But take the most aggravated form of Diarrhoea and the mildest attack of dysentery and we shall find them so much alike in all the leading characteristics as hardly to be distinguished by the most accurate observations.

Diarrhoea is defined a morbid increase of

Chilodactylus

Chilodactylus is a genus of fish, more frequently met with in the tropical waters than in the temperate. It is distinguished by the presence of a single dorsal fin, and the absence of a caudal fin. The body is elongated, and the head is small. The scales are small and the skin is smooth. The color is usually brown or black. It is found in the Indian Ocean, the Pacific Ocean, and the Atlantic Ocean. It is a common fish in the tropics, and is often caught by the natives. It is used for food, and its skin is used for making clothes. It is also used for making fish-bone, which is a valuable article of commerce. The fish is very hardy, and can live in salt water for a long time. It is a very useful fish, and is much valued by the natives. It is a very common fish in the tropics, and is often caught by the natives. It is used for food, and its skin is used for making clothes. It is also used for making fish-bone, which is a valuable article of commerce. The fish is very hardy, and can live in salt water for a long time. It is a very useful fish, and is much valued by the natives.

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peristaltic motion. But it may be produced by so many causes, and is so various according to the difference of these causes, that it is almost impossible to speak definitely of the subject.

It is sufficient for our purpose to divide the disease into Idiopathic and Symptomatic.

The first may be induced by causes acting directly on the stomach; or by impressions made on the alimentary canal through the medium of the general system. Of the former causes of diarrhoea the most common are, certain ingesta, which produce their effect either by their quality or quantity; and among the latter causes are checked perspiration, vehement passions, excessive fatigue, and certain diseases, as ventrillon, retrocedent gout, rheumatism, fever, &c.

In diarrhoea each discharge is preceded by a murmuring noise, and flatulence in the intestines, together with a sense of weight and uneasiness in the lower part of the belly, which cease on the discharge taking place; but are again renewed before the one, which is to succeed, ensues. As the disease advances the stomach becomes affected, and sickness, nausea and vomiting occasionally prevail: the countenance turns pale, and

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consideration of the subject, and to a statement of the
principles which should govern the conduct of the
author in the preparation of the paper.

The second part of the paper is devoted to a
detailed consideration of the subject, and to a
statement of the principles which should govern the
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the skin is dry and rigid. If the disease continue for any length of time, universal emaciation, dropsy of the lower extremities, and relaxation of every part ensues, together with a great loss of strength.

In forming our prognosis in this disease we are to determine by the particular cause from which it arises; whether symptomatic of another disorder and whether of a critical nature; as likewise by the degree of debility present in the system and the length of time it has continued.

Dissections of persons who have died of idiopathic Diarrhoea have shown ulceration of some portion of the intestines is the morbid state most usually met with; in which case the inner membrane is often abraded to a considerable extent, and its muscular coat made bare. Dissections have likewise shown that the most frequent seat of such ulceration are the follicular glands, and that these now and then become cancerous and assume the same appearance as scirrhus and cancer in other parts.

When Diarrhoea has been symptomatic the morbid changes of these organs belong to the primary disease of which the Diarrhoea is merely a symptom.

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Treatment. In the treatment of Diarrhoea two leading indications always present themselves: The first is to remove the morbid cause; the second is to check intestinal action by allaying irritation and imparting tone to the bowels.

Persuaded that the purging is sometimes induced by something irritating or offensive applied to the alimentary canal, I believe that an emetic is often indicated under such circumstance: after its operation is over a dose of rhubarb may be given with advantage: But should any fever exist, as often happens, it would be proper to resort to venesection; and this to be succeeded by some diaphoretic medicine of which opium should always constitute the basis. Exactly the same plan of treatment is adapted to the complaint arising from other causes; except when it can be traced to checked perspiration: In this last case evacuations from the alimentary canal are not always sufficient: we should endeavour to restore the surface to its natural condition; and for this purpose the warm bath or some diaphoretic, as the *Spiritus mindereri*, effervescent draughts, will be eminently beneficial. This and other recent cases

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furuncles are simple in their nature and not difficult of cure.

A different treatment is demanded in chronic abscesses & long standing and more or less connected with a diseased condition of some one of the chylopoietic viscera. Here our inquiries must be directed to the state of the system. & to inquire from what cause the disease may have proceeded if there is a ulcer and carbuncle, as is most commonly the case we should not be slow to resort to the lancet. The propriety of venesection in this case is attested by the simple & rapid & its good effects and is completely established by the appearances of inflammation discovered by dissection: nor will a simple blinding however copious always answer in the case before us. Chronic suppurations though not so dangerous have a firmer adhesion of the parts which they occupy than the more recent and to dislodge & subvert them is comparatively more difficult. We should not be disappointed therefore if no striking effects follow the first bleeding in chronic cases of inflammation. But we should go on repeating it every day or two as long as the condition of the

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power and strength of the patient will admit of the practice, and we shall thereby fail to be satisfied with the result. It is this practice confined to a few: on the contrary it is pursued by the best practitioners of this city. We should recollect however, that copious venesection is altogether inadvisable: the blood should be drawn often and in small quantity at a time.

As a part of the same plan of treatment emetics of Ipecac: two or three times a week. These do not act principally as evacuants, though as such they are of advantage; but by producing a set of new actions they break down the morbid associations, and renovate the constitution of the whole alimentary canal.

After such impressions as we desire have been made by the cautious use of venesection and emetics of Ipecac: then a combination of rhubarb, Ipecac: Opium may be given with advantage: and at night on going to bed ten grains of dovers powder should be taken and its operation promoted by warm beverages.

Much advantage may be derived from the habitual use of the warm bath: but to this

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its full effect something stimulating should be used to the water as mustard, salt, or cayenne pepper: a bath of brine is highly recommended: when used it should be employed every day, and generally just before going to bed, after the patient have entered his bed he should be rubbed all over with a flesh brush till a glow is diffused over the whole body.

The remedies already mentioned having proved insufficient we are next to have recourse to some preparation of alum. This medicine is exceedingly valuable in diarrhoea and is particularly well suited to the state of the Disease now under consideration. It is decidedly tonic to the bowels and may be administered so as to prove moderately laxative. Three or four grains combined with half a grain of opium may be given three or four times a day. In some cases a small portion of pæca may be added with utility, especially if the surface of the body is dry or the vessels are hurried with griping or other uneasiness. A combination of alum and white vitriol is much extolled by Boerhaave in the treatment of diarrhoea (and denominated by him the vitriolic solution). It is made thus.

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Take of White vitriol ℥iij
rock alum 3j
cochineal ℥ssij
boiling water ℥j.

Mix these together in a marble mortar, until the solution is cold, and when the sediment is deposited pour it off clear for use. The alum may be increased or diminished according to circumstances: that is, when much evacuation is required it is necessary to lessen the quantity of alum and increase that of the white vitriol & vice versa. The dose is from a teaspoonful to 3℥s every six hours. Sometimes it may be necessary to give the alum & white vitriol in equal quantities. In moderate cases the remedy should be continued for weeks or even months. In cases of a full & powerful it generally occasions vomiting and purging on its first exhibition. If vomiting be required it will be advantageous to employ chamomile tea along with the vitriolic solution. If the medicine occasions too much nausea (a small tincture of which is intended and will prove useful) the dose must be diminished. If it produce griping or purging at first it has been used for a little while, it will

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to prove & counteract these effects by the addition
of a small quantity of Opium. There is no neces-
sity of any particular regimen: The patient
may eat his usual meals and at the usual times.
such is Mosely's account of his remedy I can-
not say a great deal respecting it from my own
personal experience. The principal objection to its
employment is its exceedingly nauseating and
unpleasant effects on the stomach. Few persons
will employ it for a long time even in the small-
est doses. It is little employed in this city or in the
country. But formerly it was much more used,
and was a favourite remedy with the late Profr.
or Taylor who was enthusiastic in its praise,
preferring it to all other articles in chronic rheu-
thoid. That it is eminently tonic might be inferred
from the known qualities of its constituents, and
from the testimony of the most respectable pro-
fessionals who have employed it. Moreover it
should be remarked that it is extremely disagreeable
& it is with invincible reluctance that patients
can be prevailed on to take it.

It remains to say something of blisters as a
remedy in Diarrhoea. The united testimony of all
practitioners is entirely in their favour. They may

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be applied to either of the extremities, and it has been said by Kushi that their efficacy is augmented by their alternate application, first to the ankles and then to the wrists. They act on the principle of revulsion, or by withdrawing disease from the centre to the circumference. They do good also by breaking down the morbid associations on which Diarrhoea and other chronic Disorders principally depend. To obtain their full effect they should be continued to excess. The surface of the body and that of the intestines are antagonising powers, and by creating irritation on the skin we may often do away those Disorders of the alimentary canal which are accompanied by, or depend on any irritation in that part.

Of the several forms of Idiopathic Diarrhoea it now only remains for me to treat of that which depends on debility or relaxation of the alimentary canal.

This is often met with in the final stage of inflammatory Diarrhoeas above described; tho' more commonly it occurs as a primary affection of the vessels among people who from extreme Age or other causes are very much

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The indication of cure is exceedingly simple and points directly to the restoration of tone to the stomach and bowels. For this purpose the whole catalogue of tonics and astringents has been run through in the treatment of the case.

Among the best of these remedies is undoubtedly the galls alone or in various states of combination. The gum Rais is also highly recommended. As an astringent to the bowels in this form of Diarrhoea much has been said of Logwood. It has been considerably employed by the practitioners of this city. It is administered in strong decoction in the case of a table-spoonful every hour. As a more astringent it is indeed very powerful and is exceedingly efficacious in this form of Diarrhoea. But our own country supplies us with several important articles of this class. The first which I now mention is the *geranium maculatum*. The root is the part selected and is generally prepared by decoction in milk. I have no experience myself with the article, but from the testimony of others I am induced to believe that much attention is due to it in the treatment of Diarrhoea arising from

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reliability. The dose & the decoction in milk is a tab-
lespoonful.

The indigenous article most employed and which
is preferable to the rest when more stringency
is desired is the root of the black berry or cowbe-
ry. A wineglass full of the strong decoction of the
root may be given every two or three hours.

These actions are best suited to diarrhoea occur-
ring in extreme old age.

To the preceding I will add one which I
consider worthy of attention. I mean the wild
indigo, known to botanists by the name of *baptis-
tia tinctoria*. It may be given in powder decoct-
ion or tincture. The dose of the powder is from a
scruple to half a drachm. In a case of diarrhoea
which came under my care during the last
summer I gave the tincture in the dose of ʒj
every two hours; and in three days the patient
was perfectly well & has remained well ever
since. This patient had been labouring under
the disease for two weeks previously to taking
this medicine during which time he had ta-
ken the chalk mixtures without effect. My friend
Mr. Watson is intended to write on this plant he
gives it in several cases of the disease and much success

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The Mineral acids are important articles especially in all acute protracted cases of diarrhoea. It is worthy of remark that while the vegetable acids uniformly aggravate the complaints of the alimentary canal, the Mineral acids have an effect directly opposite. The sulphuric and nitric acids are most employed, and of these two the nitric is generally preferred.

Little harm can arise from any course of medicine abroad in diarrhoea unless we direct an appropriate diet. This ought to consist of light and digestible food; such as boiled rice with milk, sago arrow root and the lighter sorts of meats roasted, as lamb, chicken &c. Weak brandy and water would not be injurious as a drink. Many cases of diarrhoea are especially those of long standing originate in Dyspepsia and are kept up by a vitiated state of the stomach. I have rarely met with a case of this kind in which the stomach was not more or less affected. All the rules of diet which are applicable to the treatment of Dyspepsia are here to be strictly enforced. and when gastric symptoms are particularly marked it will be proper to use also the medicines required in

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dyspepsia. especially the preparations of iron.
The vegetable bitters also as Columbo Semarou-
ba, quassia &c. are all beneficial in cases of
dyspepsia connected with dysentery. By
addressing our remedies, to the stomach and
aiding into our aid the whole treatment of
indigestion we will often find the most ob-
stinate cases give way.

It is necessary that an equable tempera-
ture on the surface should be preserved, and
the best means of accomplishing this is the
flannel roller. This is particularly described by
Sewar. He first speaks of the utility of keeping
up a natural degree of warmth on the surface
in all the colder affections particularly in dysen-
tery, and proceeds as follows: "four or five folds of
flannel very fine, or a large piece of finey hosi-
ery is to be placed on the abdomen, and over this
a flannel bandage is to be passed rather lightly
and in a uniform manner from the groin to the
upper pit and brought back again. This mode
of confining a certain degree of heat over that
part of the body which is the seat of the disease
should be preserved in by the patient as long
as the complaint continues. When the bandage

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is early resorted it seldom fails to effect a cure. In whatever stage employed it produces a very speedy amelioration of the symptoms. It acts on the same principle with the warm bath, which is one of the best remedies in inflammatory dysentery: it preserves all the virtues, and is free from its inconvenience. The bath unless regulated by the thermometer is apt to be too warm and to produce a perspiration so profuse as to be succeeded by an alarming debility, and as it cools, it demands frequent additions of warmth which breaks the uniformity of its temperature. Nor can the bath be used so long as the disease requires. But by wearing flannel in the manner described the patient always bears about him a bath invariable in its temperature, which never weakens by perspiration, does not interrupt him in eating, sleeping or his amusements, and renders it no longer necessary for him not to expose himself to cold. The immediate effects are first to remove the loose torpor of the abdomen under which dysenteric patients are apt to labor. Therefore the application of flannel they feel as if they had no bowels, but when it is applied you remove over the whole abdomen the anxiety before

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erecting; secondly it obviates the tormina and tenesmus. The torpor of the bowels is interrupted only by occasional pain which seems to leave them worse than before. The femoral bandage prevents the recurrence of this pain. Third it removes depression and languor: the patient's mind is invigorated and better fitted for the emergency of life. Fourth: it corrects the difficulty of breathing which accompanies the debility arising from dysentery. If the bandage is drawn too tight it produces a different kind of dyspnoea and should be loosened, &c. &c.

Then highly is the femoral bandage recommended in inflammatory dysentery. I have little experience with it in that disease. It is highly recommended by Professor Chapman as one of the most important remedies in the management of Diarrhoea.

In the treatment of diarrhoea arising from debility regular exercise should not be resorted to. Taken in any way, it is beneficial, but more so on horseback than any other; and especially if the patient be sent on a long journey. Even if all these remedies fail we should not surrender up our patient to

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despair: much may be expected from the use of mercury. This article is of unoubted utility when the diarrhoea is connected with a disease of any of the dyspeptic viscera: even when this is not the case it proves serviceable by instituting a set of new actions. In this way we may often succeed in curing a diarrhoea which has resisted all other remedies.

When every thing else has failed we should recommend to our patient as a dernier resort to take a voyage by sea to some temperate climate. This is an important means of cure and will sometimes succeed when all other remedies have been tried in vain.

As regards Symptomatic Diarrhoea which constitutes the second division of the subject I will not go into any minute details. It is to be managed on those principles and by those remedies which I have already mentioned in treating of the history and cure of idiopathic diarrhoea. But we should constantly bear in mind that discharges of this kind are often critical and highly salutary and should not be checked by artificial interposition. Diarrhoea

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often occurs at the crisis of acute fevers, is occasionally caused by gout, and also attends during the process of Puerperium: In these cases we should always suffer it to go on unless it become so profuse as to cause debility.

After noon at the end of each hour
occasionally came by post and also
during the hour of twilight. A large rain
was falling during sunset & for some
it became a fog as the sun set.

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